

VERTIGO

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4

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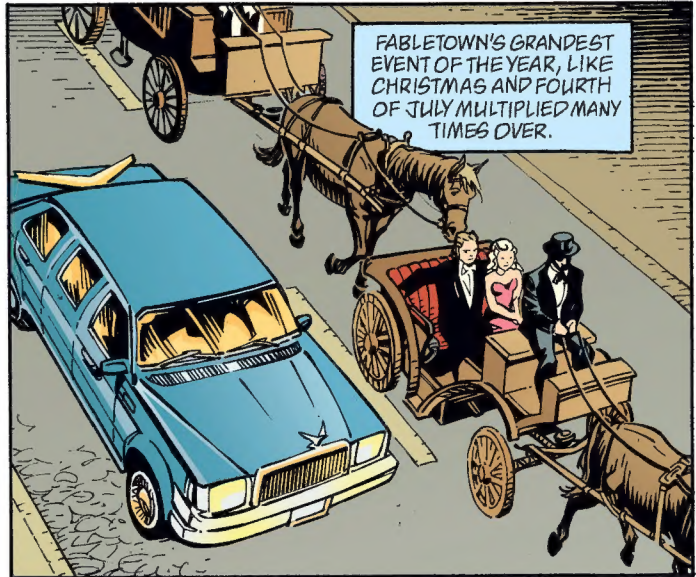
SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

FABLES™

AND JUST LIKE THAT,
THE BIG DAY ARRIVED.



FABLETOWN'S GRANDEST
EVENT OF THE YEAR, LIKE
CHRISTMAS AND FOURTH
OF JULY MULTIPLIED MANY
TIMES OVER.



CHAPTER FOUR: REMEMBRANCE DAY

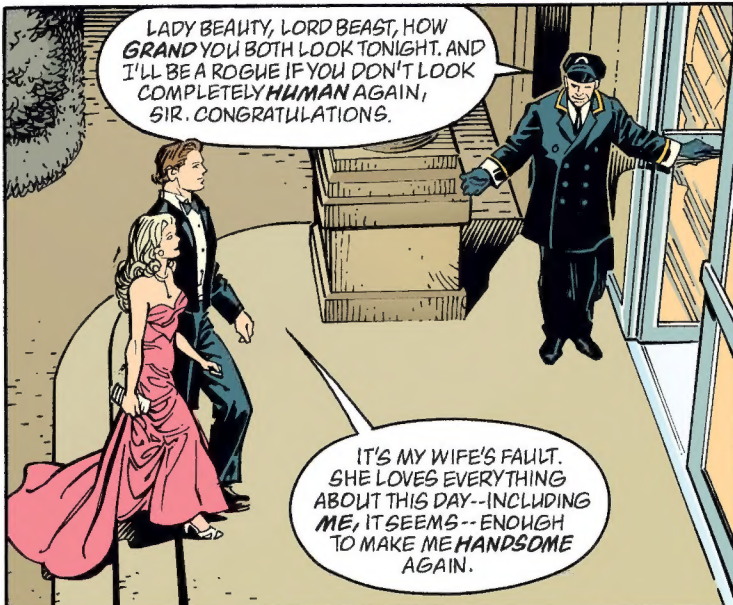
In which everyone dresses up to the nines, old stories are retold and the wolf takes a swim.
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AT THE
FRONT DOOR
BY TWILIGHT.

AS PROMISED,
MY LOVE.

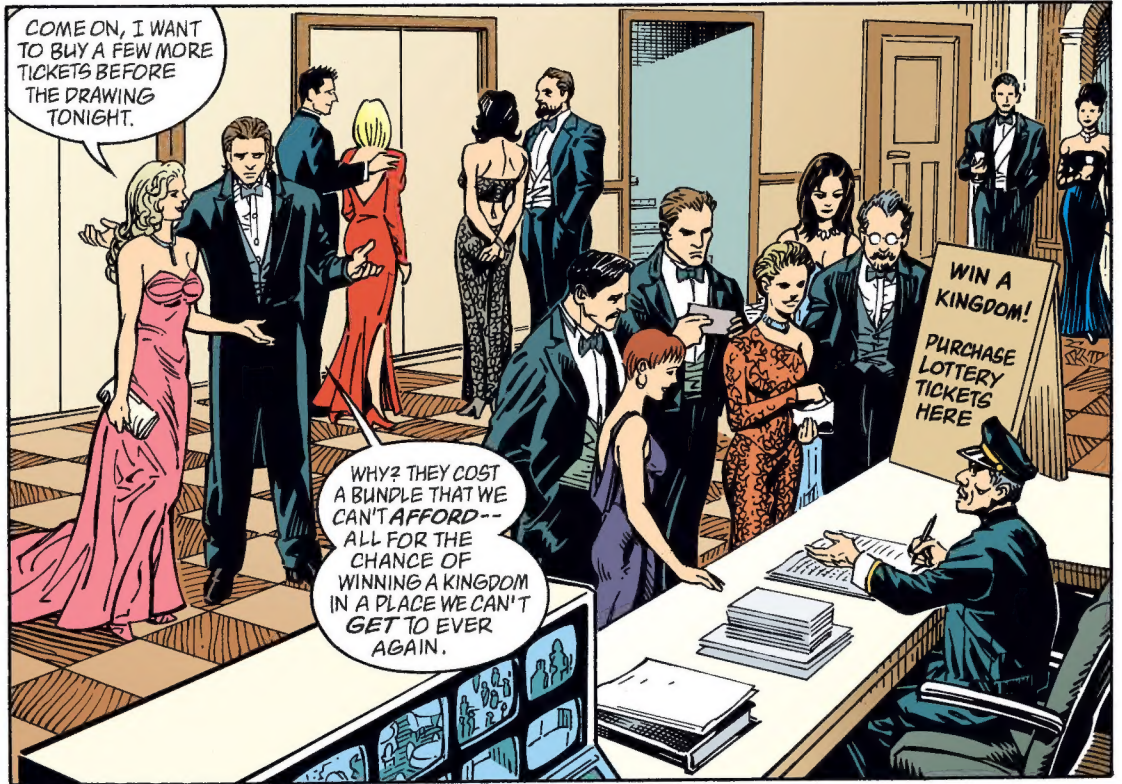
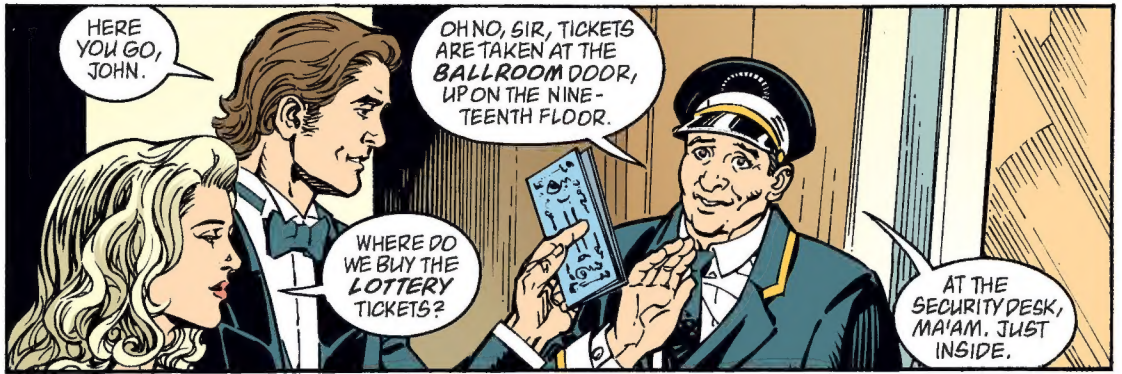
LADY BEAUTY, LORD BEAST, HOW
GRAND YOU BOTH LOOK TONIGHT. AND
I'LL BE A ROGUE IF YOU DON'T LOOK
COMPLETELY HUMAN AGAIN,
SIR. CONGRATULATIONS.

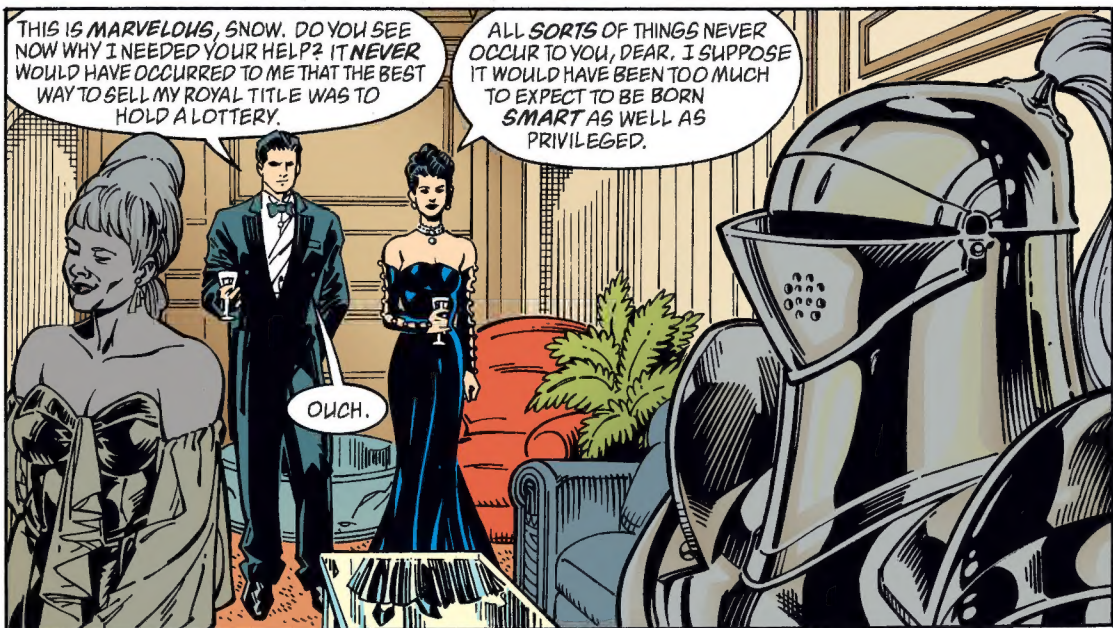
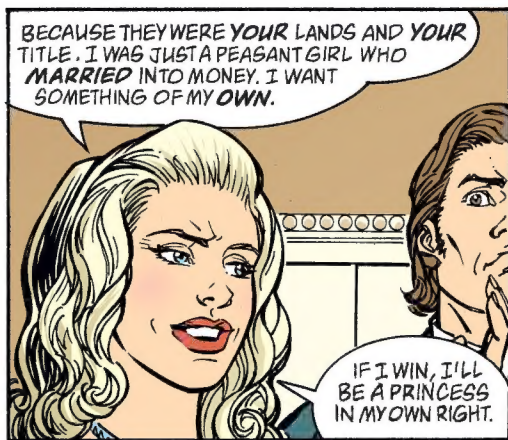


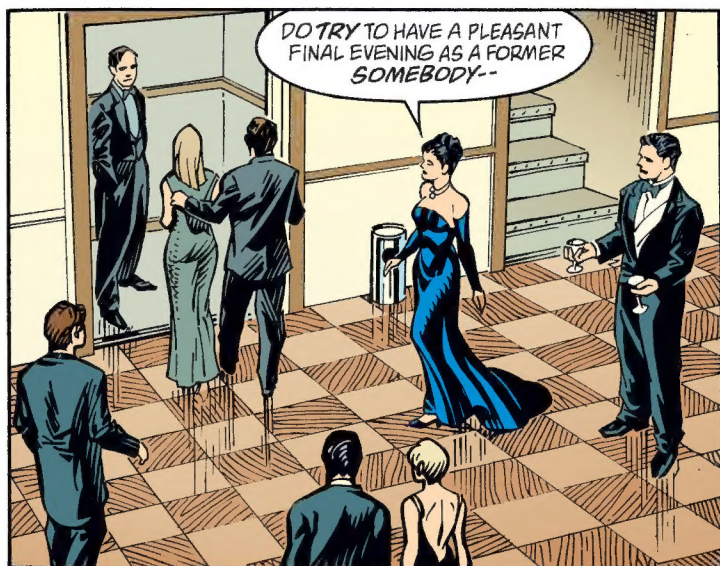
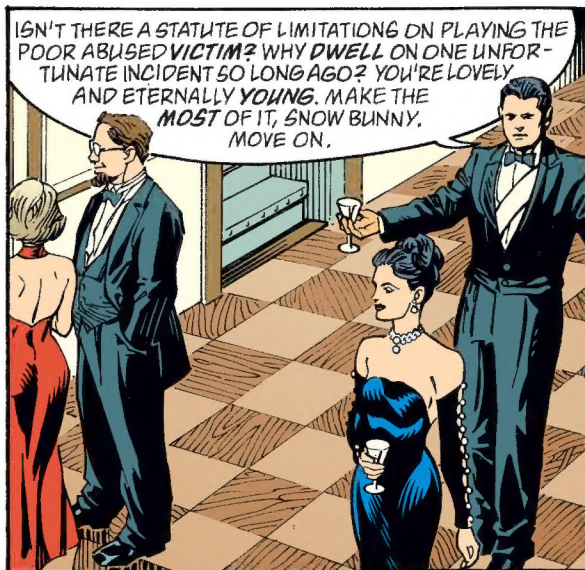
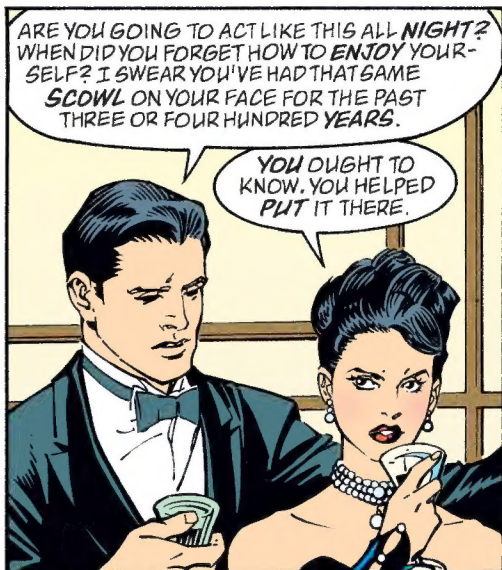
IT'S MY WIFE'S FAULT.
SHE LOVES EVERYTHING
ABOUT THIS DAY--INCLUDING
ME, IT SEEMS-- ENOUGH
TO MAKE ME HANDSOME
AGAIN.



DON'T
START.





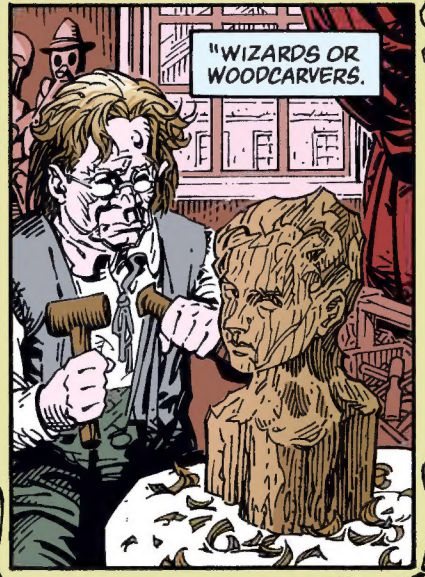


"ONCE WE WERE A THOUSAND SEPARATE KINGDOMS, SPREAD OVER A HUNDRED MAGIC WORLDS.



"WE WERE KINGS AND COBBLERS.

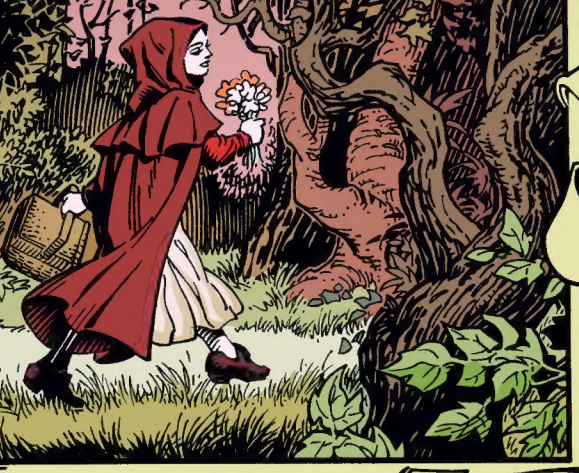
"WIZARDS OR WOODCARVERS.



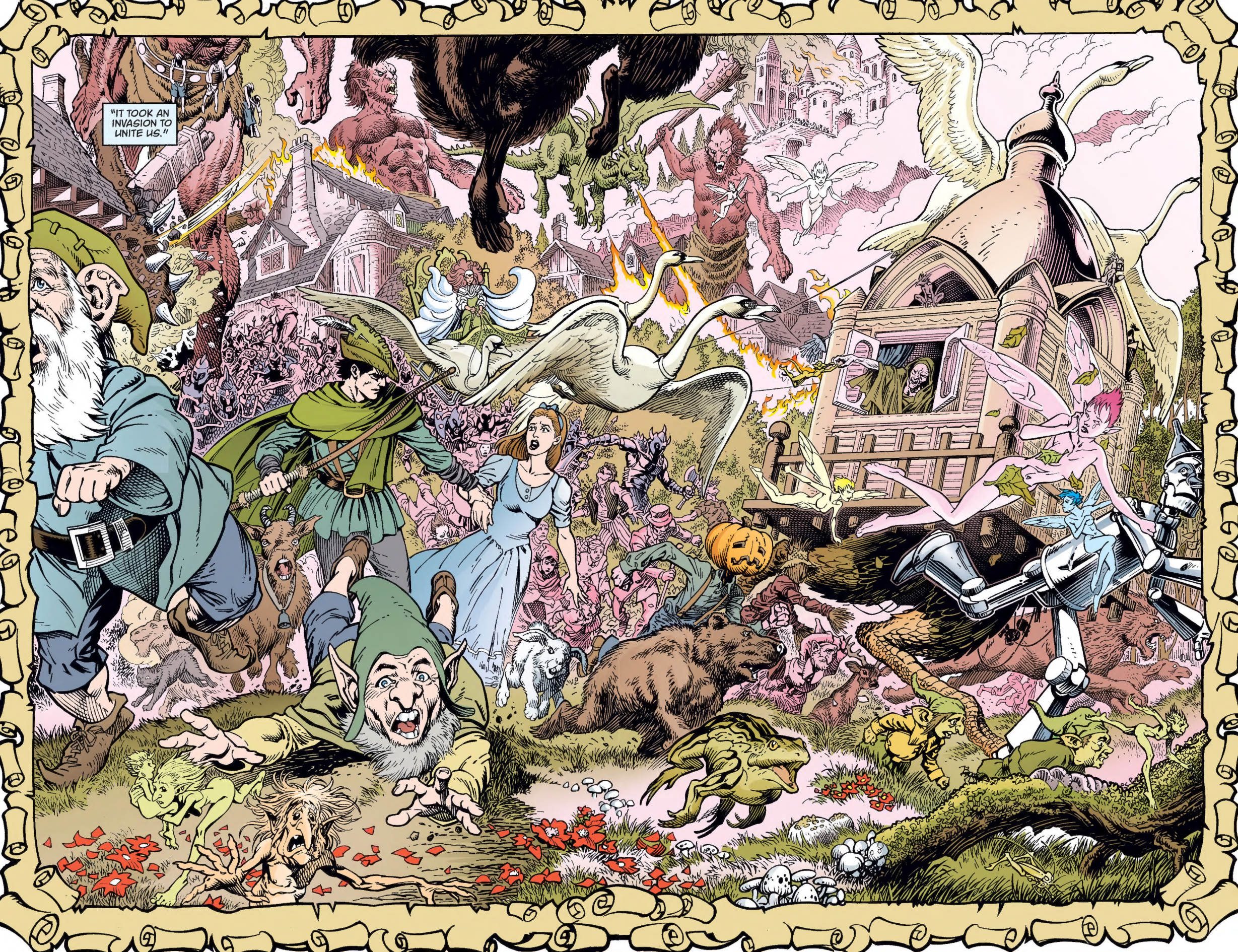
"WE HAD OUR SINNERS, OUR SAINTS, AND OUR BLATANT SOCIAL CLIMBERS.

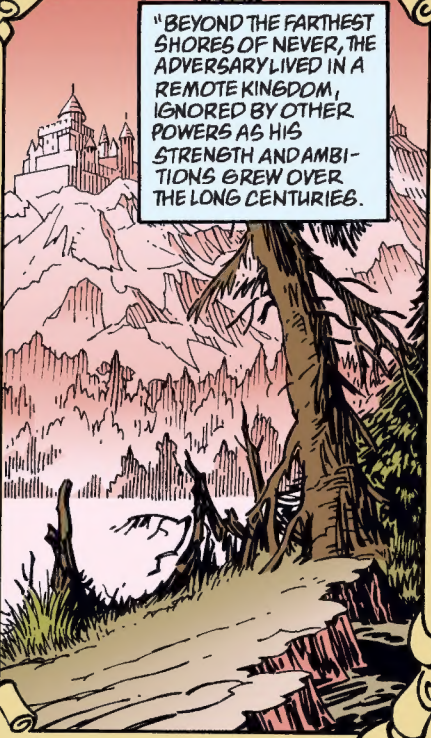


"AND FROM THE GRANDEST LORD TO THE LOWLIEST PEASANT GIRL, WE WERE, FOR THE MOST PART, STRANGERS ONE TO ANOTHER."




"IT TOOK AN INVASION TO UNITE US."






"BEYOND THE FARTHEST SHORES OF NEVER, THE ADVERSARY LIVED IN A REMOTE KINGDOM, IGNORED BY OTHER POWERS AS HIS STRENGTH AND AMBITIONS GREW OVER THE LONG CENTURIES.



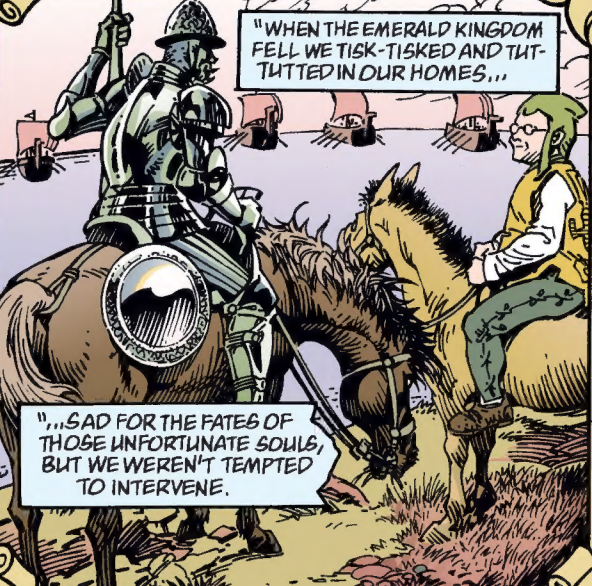
"SOME SAY HE WAS A MERE WOODLAND SPRITE, WHILE OTHERS CLAIM HE WAS ONCE A GOD--

--THROWN DOWN FROM THE VAST HEAVENS WHEN HIS CORRUPTIONS HAD BECOME TOO GREAT FOR HIS LOFTY BRETHREN TO TOLERATE.



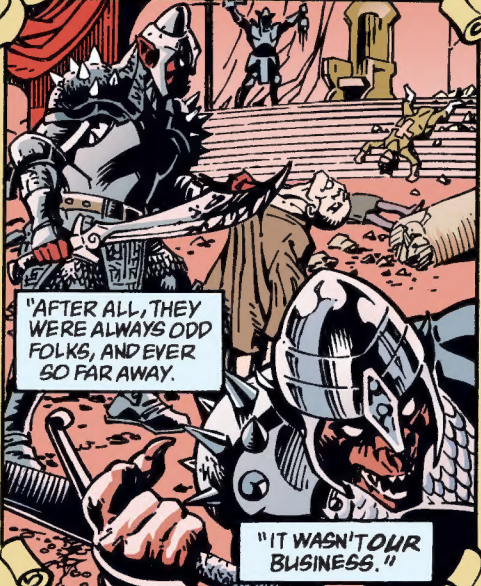
"WHATEVER HIS TRUE ORIGINS, HE GREW INTO A DARK THING OF INFINITE HUNGER.

"AND AFTER HE'D CONQUERED HIS OWN LANDS, PUTTING EACH OF ITS FORMER KINGS TO THE SWORD, HE TURNED HIS UNQUENCHABLE APPETITES IN OUR DIRECTION.



"WHEN THE EMERALD KINGDOM FELL WE TISK-TISKED AND TUT-TUTTED IN OUR HOMES,"

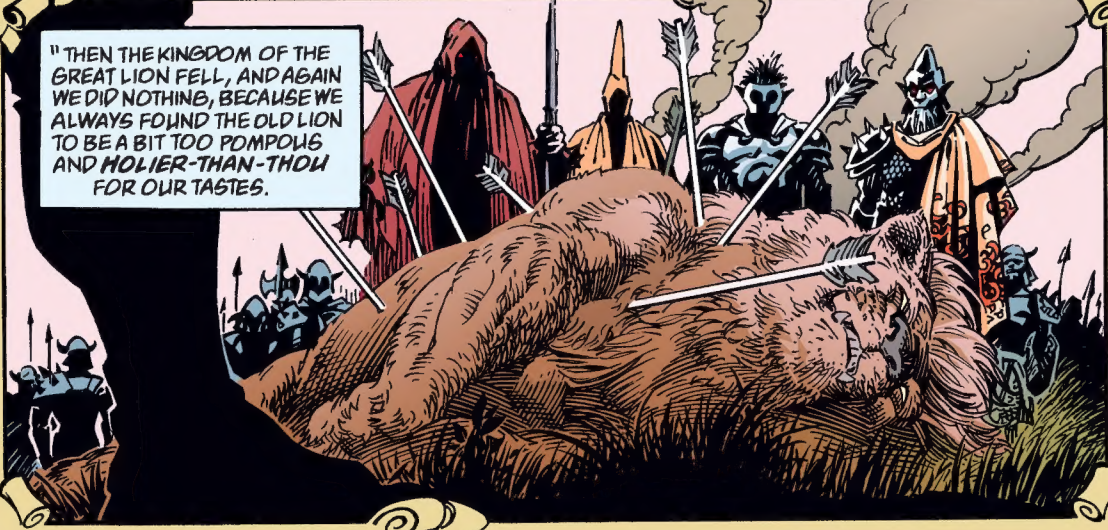
"...SAD FOR THE FATES OF THOSE UNFORTUNATE SOULS, BUT WE WEREN'T TEMPTED TO INTERVENE.



"AFTER ALL, THEY WERE ALWAYS ODD FOLKS, AND EVER SO FAR AWAY.

"IT WASN'T OUR BUSINESS."

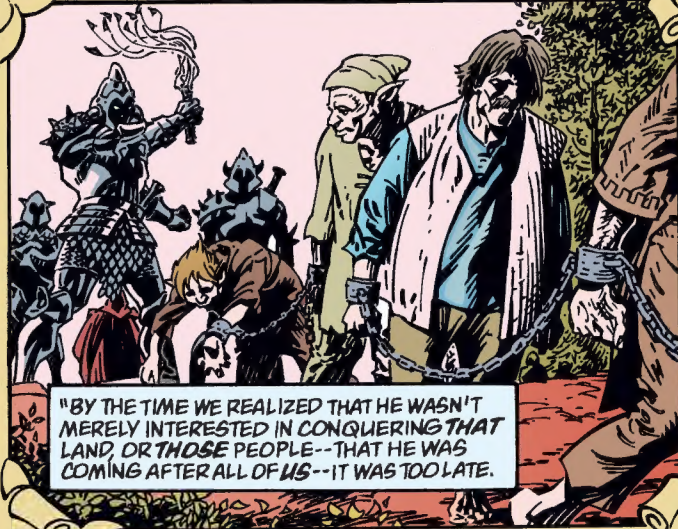
"THEN THE KINGDOM OF THE GREAT LION FELL, AND AGAIN WE DID NOTHING, BECAUSE WE ALWAYS FOUND THE OLD LION TO BE A BIT TOO POMPUS AND HOLIER-THAN-THOU FOR OUR TASTES.



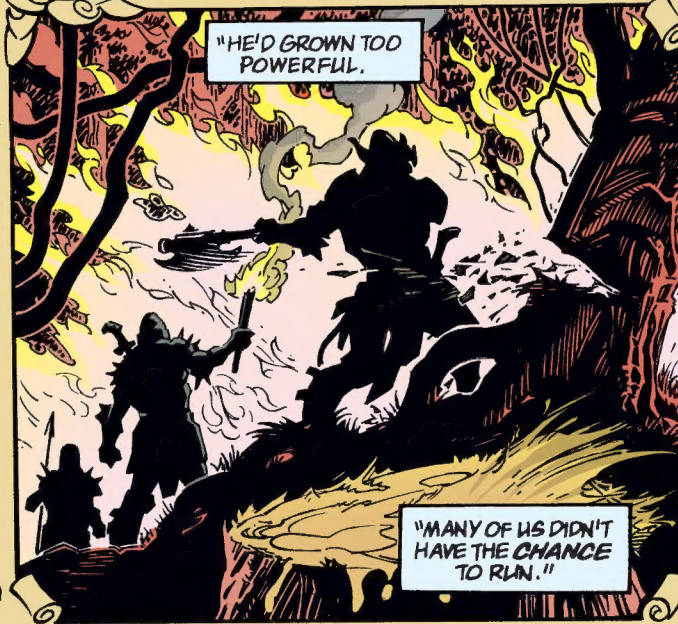
"AND ONE BY ONE, OUR SCATTERED LANDS FELL UNDER THE ADVERSARY'S DOMINION, SWALLOWED UP INTO HIS EVER GROWING EMPIRE. HAD WE BANDED TOGETHER EARLY, WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STOP HIM.



"BY THE TIME WE REALIZED THAT HE WASN'T MERELY INTERESTED IN CONQUERING THAT LAND, OR THOSE PEOPLE-- THAT HE WAS COMING AFTER ALL OF US-- IT WAS TOO LATE.



"HE'D GROWN TOO POWERFUL.



"MANY OF US DIDN'T HAVE THE CHANCE TO RUN."

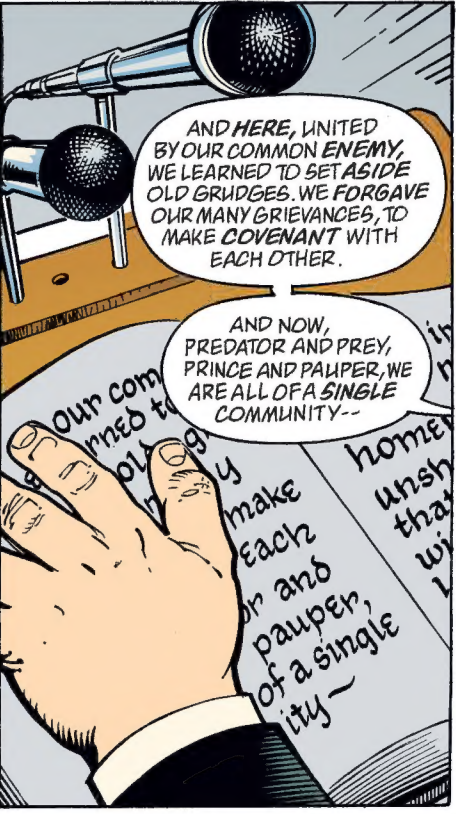
"SOME OF US SURVIVED, TOO FEW, ALONE, OR IN SMALL GROUPS, OVER THE SPAN OF MANY YEARS--OF LIFETIMES-- WE HID AND RAN AND AVOIDED CAPTURE."



"WE LIVED AS OUTLAWS AND PHANTOMS."

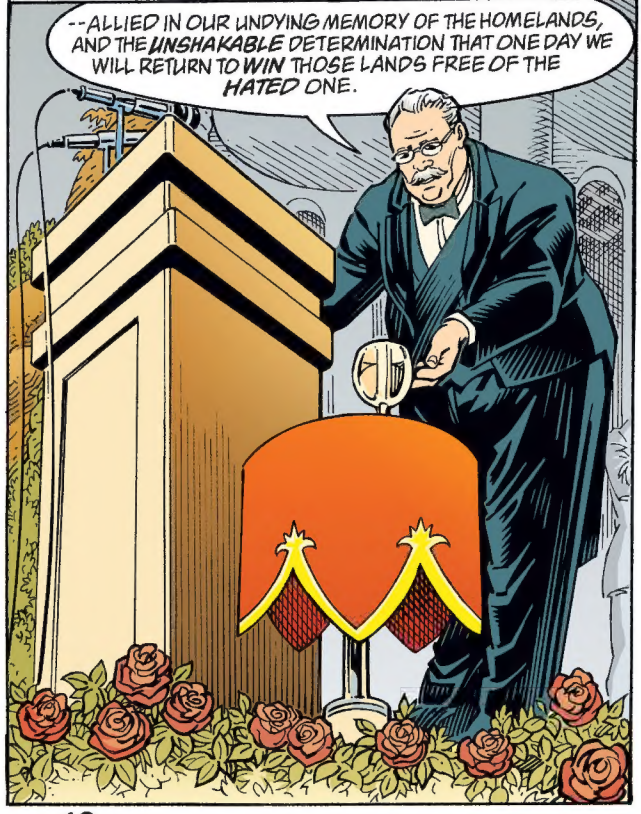
"UNTIL WE COULD MAKE OUR WAY HERE, TO THIS DREARY MUNDANE PLACE: THE ONE WORLD THE ADVERSARY SEEMED TO TAKE NO INTEREST IN."

Until we could make our way here, to this dreary mundane place: the one world the Adversary seemed to take no interest in. And here, united by our common enemy, we old grudges (we



AND HERE, UNITED BY OUR COMMON ENEMY, WE LEARNED TO SET ASIDE OLD GRUDGES. WE FORGAVE OUR MANY GRIEVANCES, TO MAKE COVENANT WITH EACH OTHER.

AND NOW, PREDATOR AND PREY, PRINCE AND PAUPER, WE ARE ALL OF A SINGLE COMMUNITY--

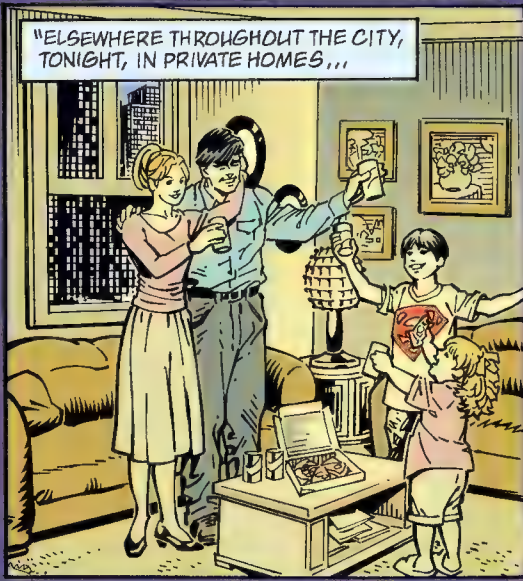


--ALLIED IN OUR UNDYING MEMORY OF THE HOMELANDS, AND THE UNSHAKABLE DETERMINATION THAT ONE DAY WE WILL RETURN TO WIN THOSE LANDS FREE OF THE HATED ONE.



LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, LIFT YOUR GLASSES AND JOIN ME, PLEASE, IN DRINKING THIS TOAST.

TO THE HOMELANDS.



"ELSEWHERE THROUGHOUT THE CITY, TONIGHT, IN PRIVATE HOMES, ...



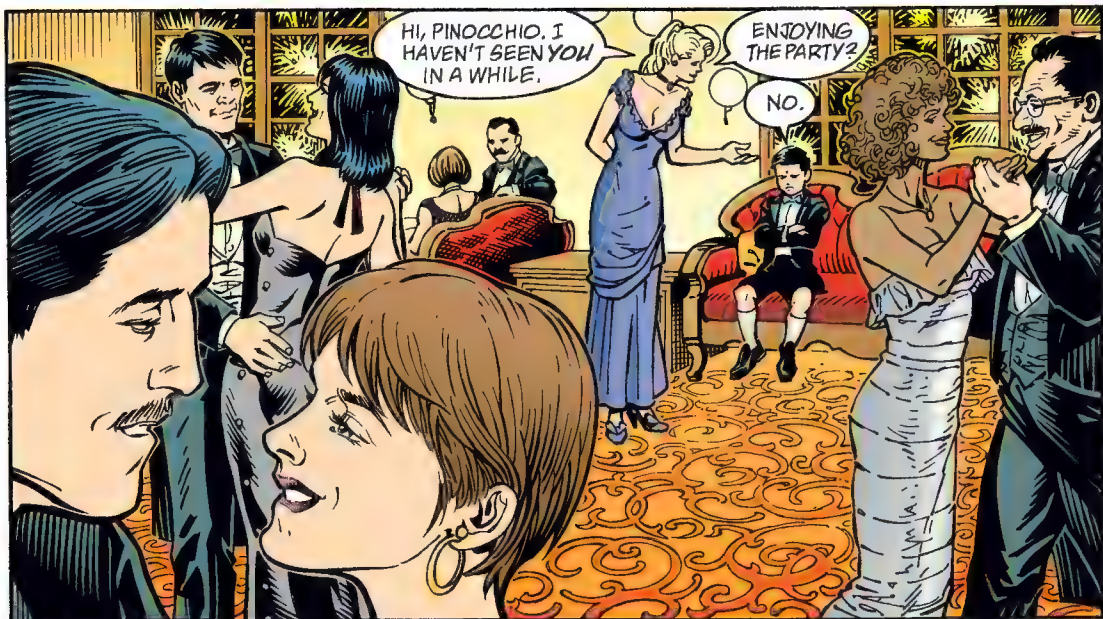
"...AND TREASURED PUBLIC PLACES, ...



"...AND IN THE UPSTATE HOMES, WHERE OUR MORE INHUMAN MEMBERS DWELL, ...



"...OTHER GLASSES ARE RAISED, BY THOSE WHO COULDN'T BE WITH US HERE TONIGHT BUT ARE STILL CITIZENS OF FABLETOWN, AND ARE EQUALLY DETERMINED NEVER TO FORGET."



HI, PINOCCHIO. I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A WHILE.

ENJOYING THE PARTY?

NO.



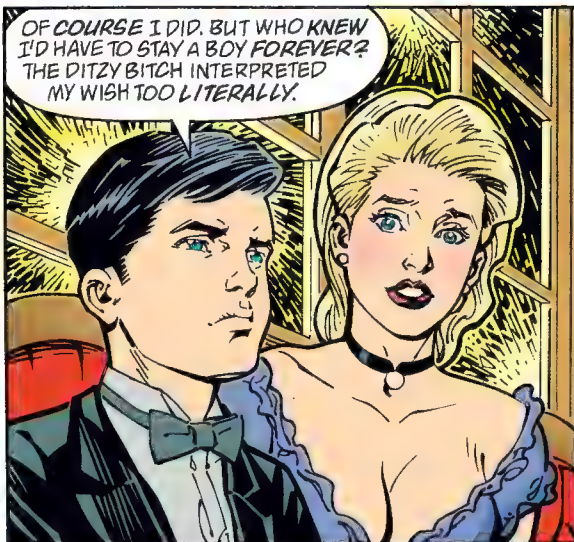
I AM MOST CERTAINLY *NOT* HAVING A GOOD TIME. I NEVER HAVE A GOOD TIME AT THIS RIDICULOUS CELEBRATION.

THEN WHY DO YOU COME EACH YEAR?



BECAUSE, SOONER OR LATER, THAT BLUE FAIRY, WHO TURNED ME INTO A REAL BOY, IS GOING TO SHOW HER FACE AT ONE OF THESE THINGS, AND I'M GOING TO KICK HER PRETTY AZURE ASS.

WHY? I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO BECOME A REAL BOY.



OF COURSE I DID. BUT WHO KNEW I'D HAVE TO STAY A BOY FOREVER? THE DITZY BITCH INTERPRETED MY WISH TOO LITERALLY.

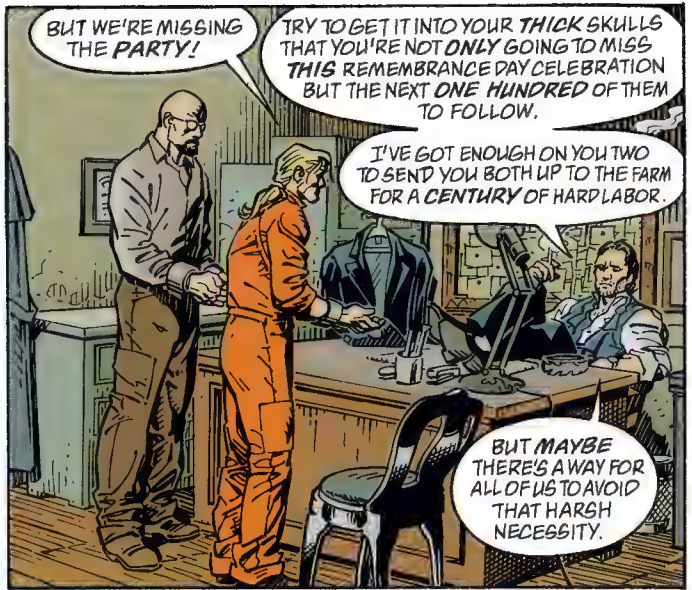


I'M OVER THREE CENTURIES OLD AND I STILL HAVEN'T GONE THROUGH PUBERTY.

I WANT TO GROW UP, I WANT MY BALLS TO DROP, AND I WANT TO GET LAID.



BOTH OF YOU, QUIT YOUR DAMNED BITCHING AND CRYING.



BUT WE'RE MISSING THE PARTY!

TRY TO GET IT INTO YOUR THICK SKULLS THAT YOU'RE NOT ONLY GOING TO MISS THIS REMEMBRANCE DAY CELEBRATION BUT THE NEXT ONE HUNDRED OF THEM TO FOLLOW.

I'VE GOT ENOUGH ON YOU TWO TO SEND YOU BOTH UP TO THE FARM FOR A CENTURY OF HARD LABOR.

BUT MAYBE THERE'S A WAY FOR ALL OF US TO AVOID THAT HARSH NECESSITY.



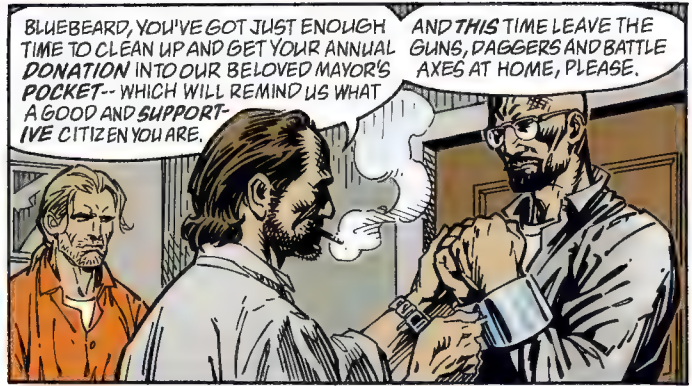
BULLSHIT, BIGBY! SURE, YOU GOT BLUE-BEARD HERE BECAUSE YOU CAUGHT HIM RED-HANDED TORTURING ME...

SHUT UP, YOU PATHETIC, BLEATING CHILD.

...BUT YOU'VE GOT NOTHING ON ME -- NOTHING YOU CAN PROVE, ANYWAY.



YOU'RE ABOUT TO FIND OUT EXACTLY HOW MUCH I CAN PROVE. BUT UNTIL I BRING THE HAMMER DOWN, YOU CAN BOTH GO TO WHAT'S LEFT OF THE PARTY-- PROVIDED YOU STAY AT LEAST A DOZEN YARDS AWAY FROM EACH OTHER AT ALL TIMES.



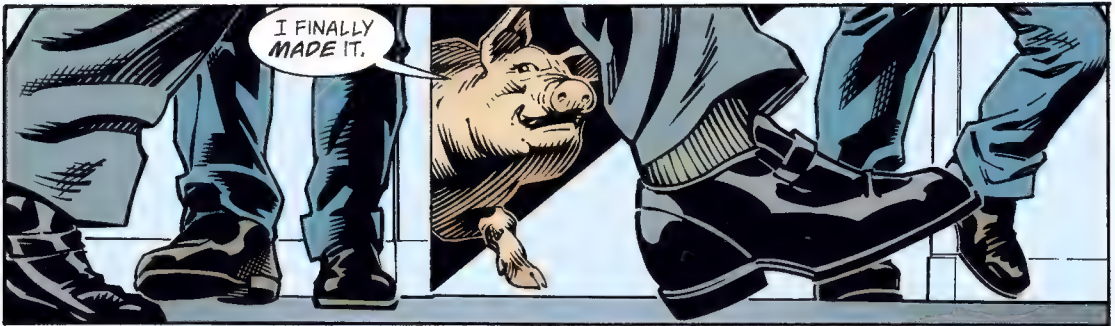
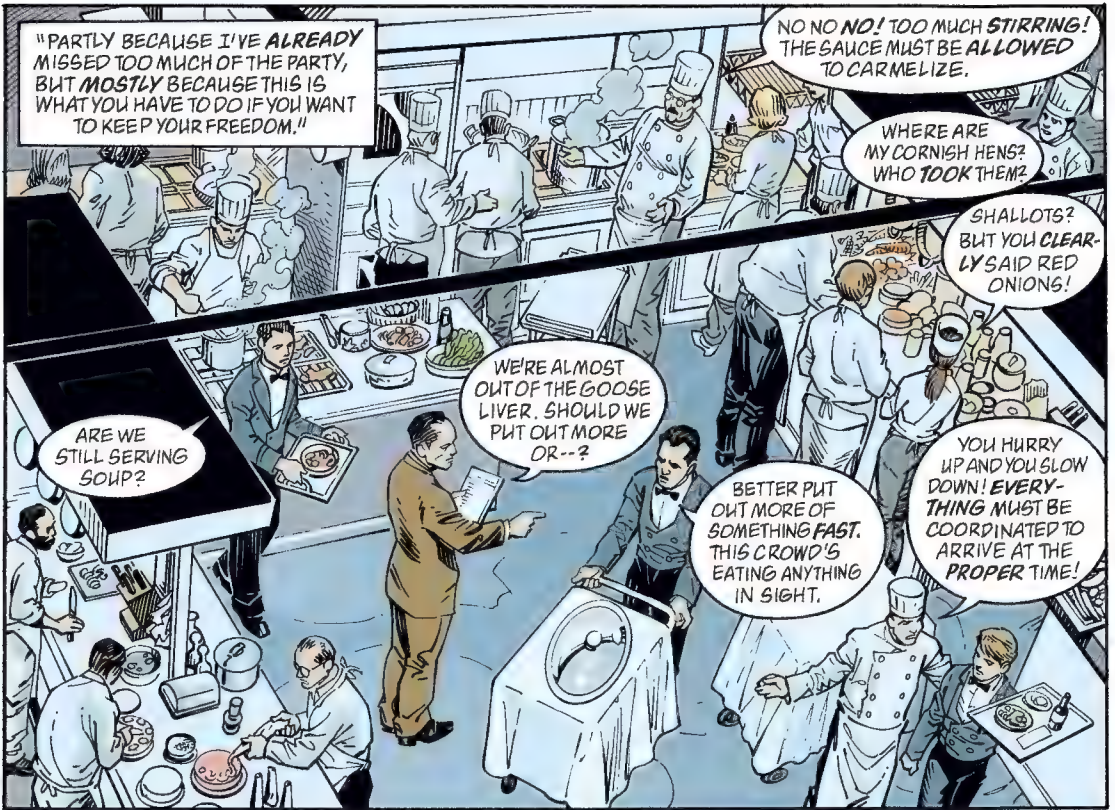
BLUEBEARD, YOU'VE GOT JUST ENOUGH TIME TO CLEAN UP AND GET YOUR ANNUAL DONATION INTO OUR BELOVED MAYOR'S POCKET-- WHICH WILL REMIND US WHAT A GOOD AND SUPPORTIVE CITIZEN YOU ARE.

AND THIS TIME LEAVE THE GUNS, DAGGERS AND BATTLE AXES AT HOME, PLEASE.



AND JACK, WE'RE GOING TO TALK PRIVATELY FOR A BIT. THEN YOU'RE GOING TO DEMONSTRATE YOUR HELPFUL NATURE BY DELIVERING A MESSAGE FROM ME TO ONE OF THE PARTY GUESTS.

WHY DON'T YOU RUN YOUR OWN DAMNED ERRANDS?





THERE YOU ARE. DON'T YOU LOOK NICE.

I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK I'D BEEN STOOD UP.

NO MATTER, YOU ALWAYS GO TO THIS THING STAG, RIGHT?



SO IT'S NOT AS IF YOU'D SUFFER ANY EMBARRASSMENT IF I NEVER SHOWED.

MY GOD, ARE YOU COMPLETELY DEVOID OF SOCIAL SKILLS?



PROBABLY. COME ON, WE NEED TO BE OUT ON THE DANCE FLOOR.



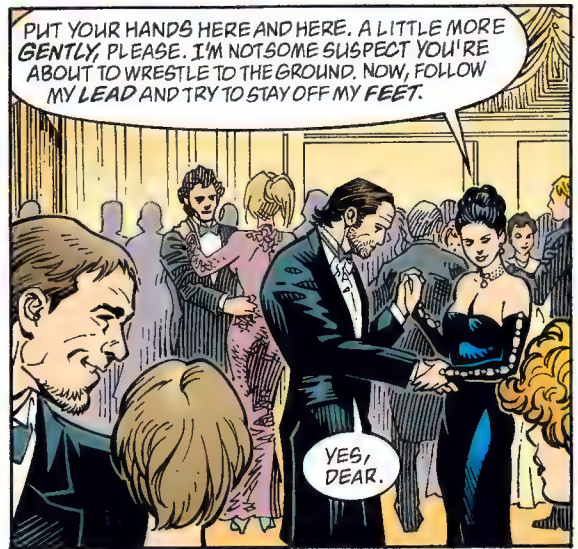
WHY? IS THIS ANOTHER PART OF YOUR COMPLEX SCHEME TO CATCH MY SISTER'S KILLER?



COULD BE. NOW, SHOW ME HOW WE DO THIS.

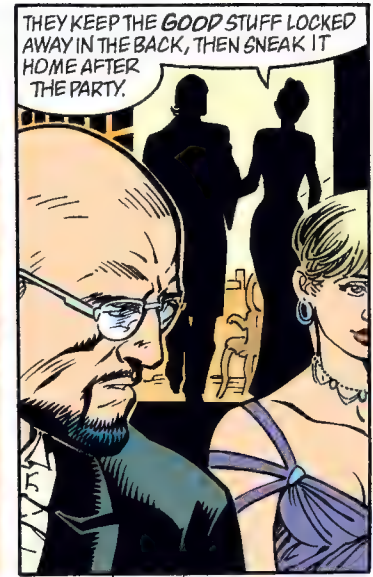
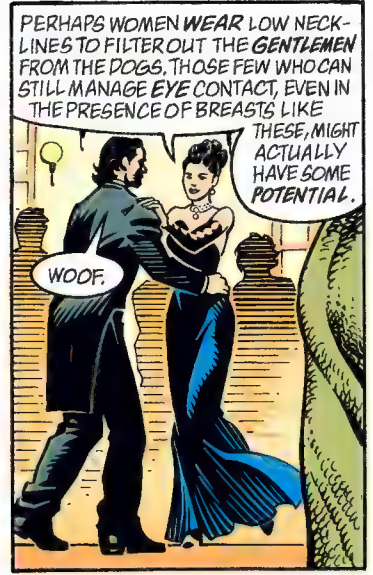
YOU'VE NEVER DANCED BEFORE?

NEVER.

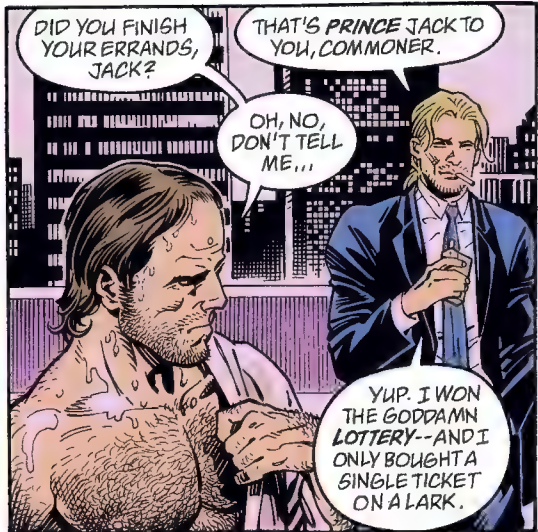
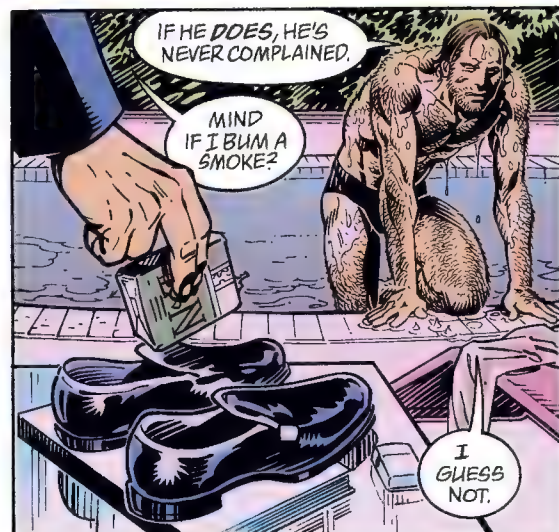
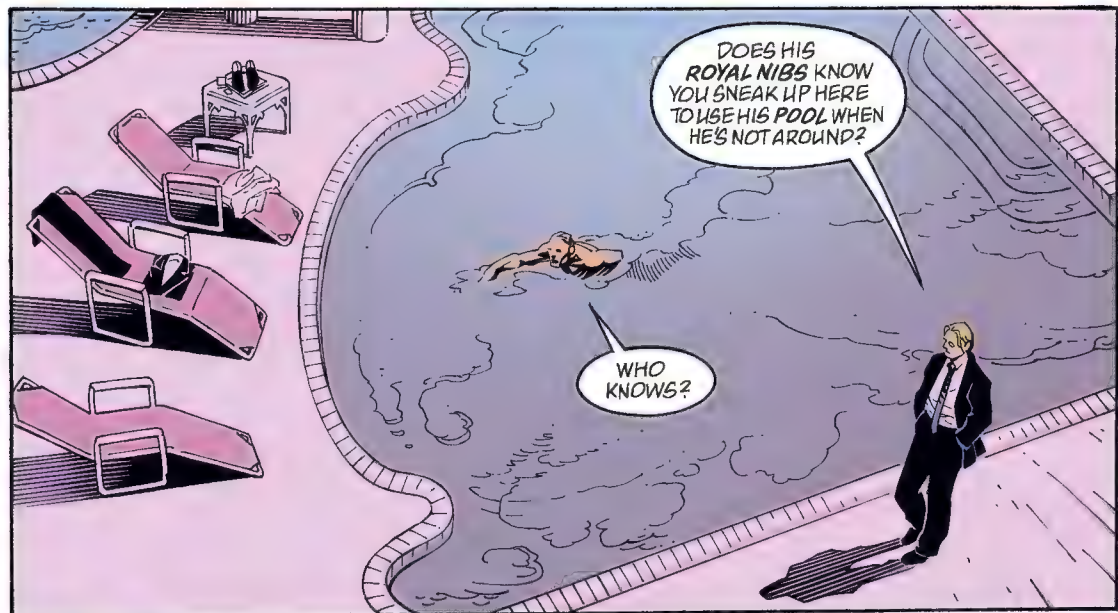
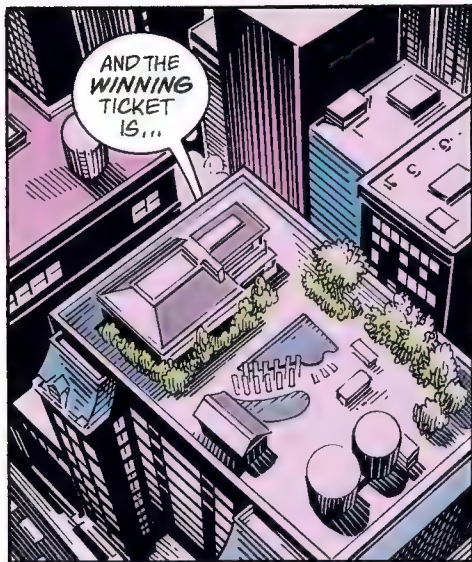


PUT YOUR HANDS HERE AND HERE. A LITTLE MORE GENTLY, PLEASE. I'M NOT SOME SUSPECT YOU'RE ABOUT TO WRESTLE TO THE GROUND. NOW, FOLLOW MY LEAD AND TRY TO STAY OFF MY FEET.

YES, DEAR.



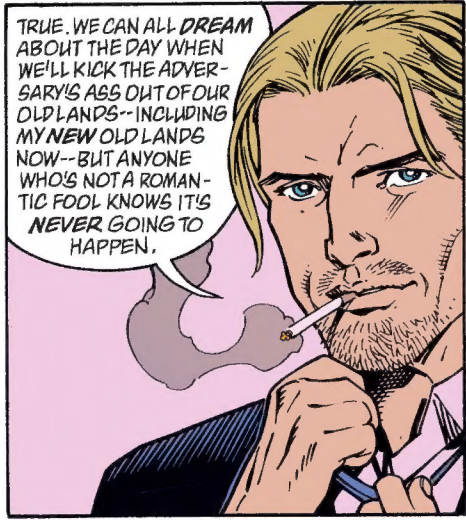
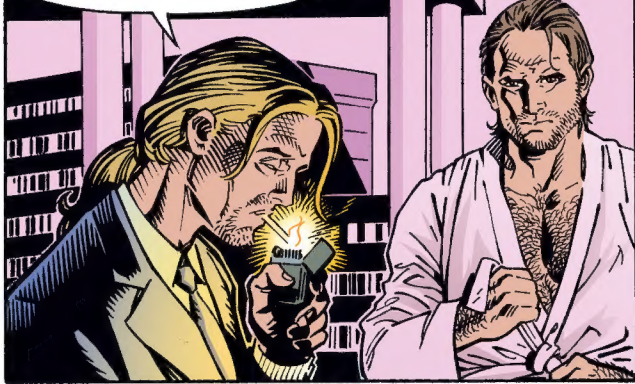




ISN'T THAT A KICK IN THE **NADS**? ALL MY LIFE I'VE BEEN TRYING ONE CRAZY SCHEME AFTER ANOTHER TO MAKE IT **BIG**, AND ALL I HAD TO DO WAS BUY A **TICKET**.

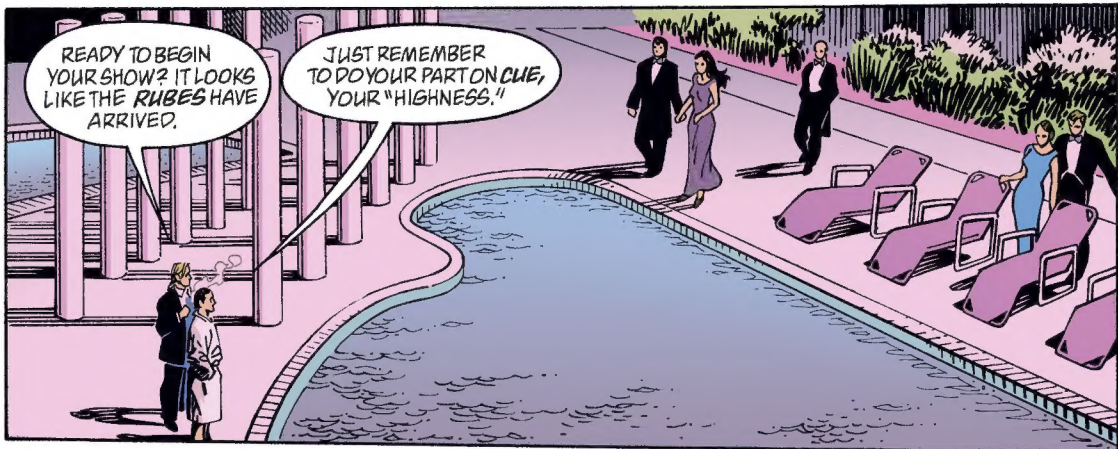
TOO BAD IT'S ALL **WORTHLESS**.

TRUE. WE CAN ALL **DREAM** ABOUT THE DAY WHEN WE'LL KICK THE **ADVERSARY'S** ASS OUT OF OUR **OLD LANDS**--INCLUDING MY **NEW OLD LANDS** NOW--BUT ANYONE WHO'S NOT A **ROMANTIC FOOL** KNOWS IT'S **NEVER GOING TO HAPPEN**.



READY TO BEGIN YOUR **SHOW**? IT LOOKS LIKE THE **RUBES** HAVE ARRIVED.

JUST REMEMBER TO DO YOUR PART ON **CUE**, YOUR "**HIGHNESS**."

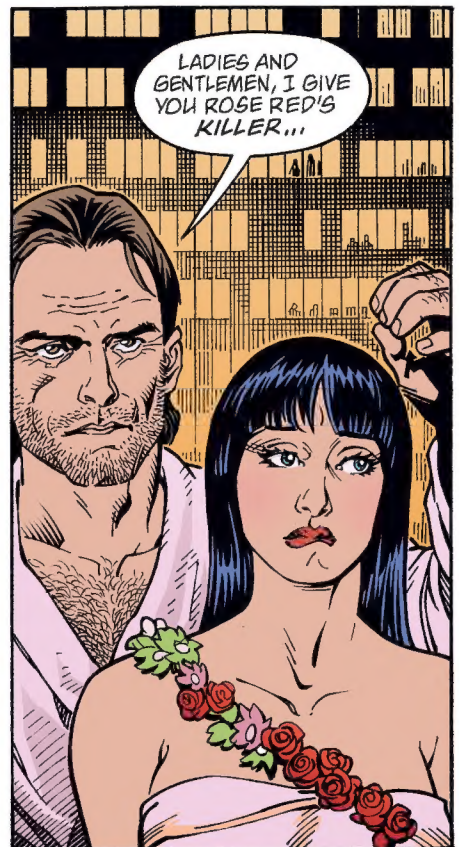
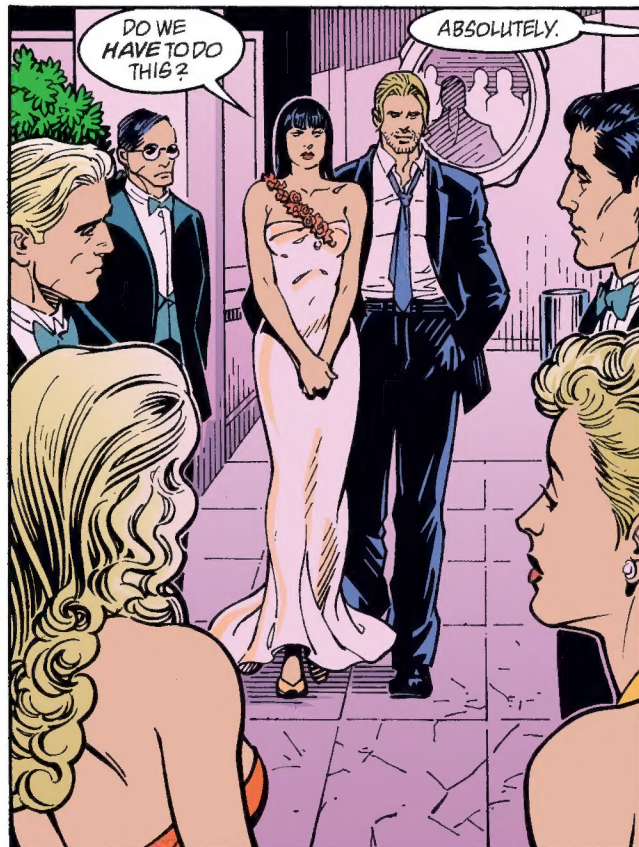


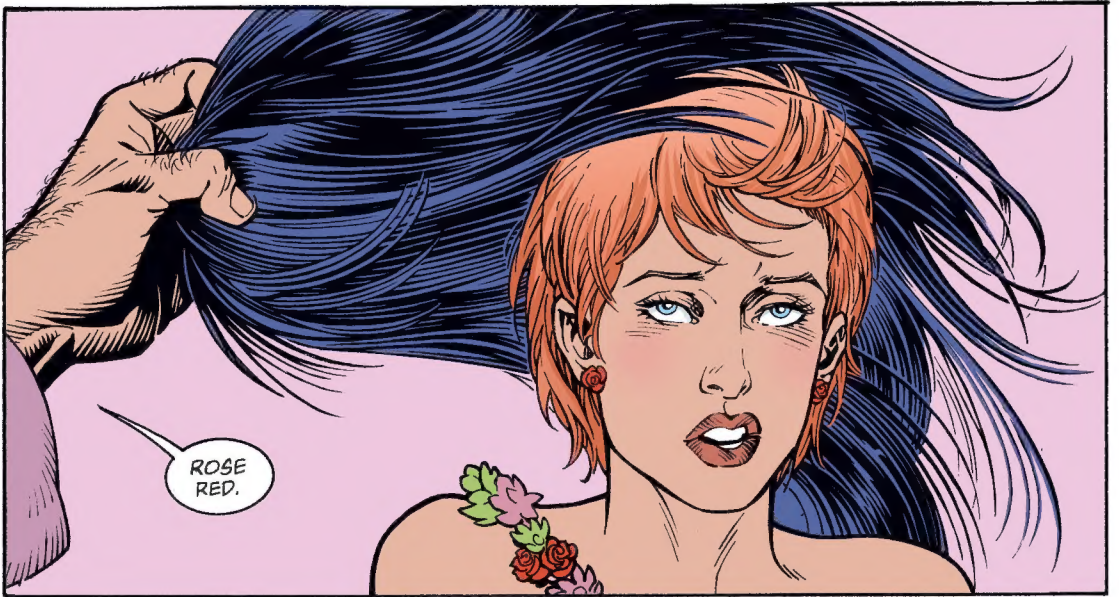
THIS IS IT. IN THE **MYSTERY NOVELS** THIS IS CALLED THE "**PARLOR SCENE**," WHERE THE **CLEVER DETECTIVE** REVEALS ALL.

IF THIS WERE A **WORK OF FICTION**, THE **AUTHOR** WOULD PAUSE THE **STORY** **HERE** TO ASK THE **READERS** IF THEY'D PUT ALL THE **CLUES** TOGETHER **YET**.

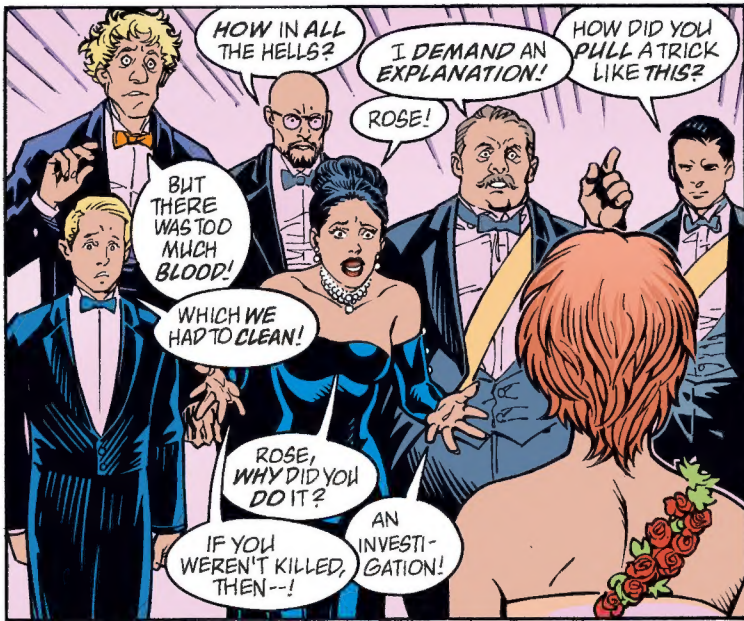
OH DO GET ON WITH IT, **YOUNG MAN**.

SORRY, SIR, BUT IN OUR **SECRET HEARTS** EVERY **REAL COPLONGS** FOR A **MOMENT** LIKE THIS, AND **DAMN FEW** GET ONE. **INDULGE** ME, PLEASE.

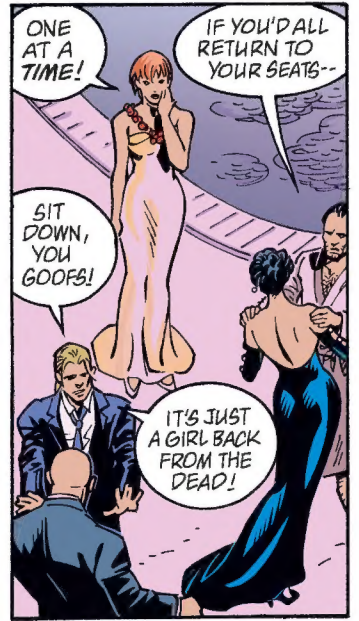




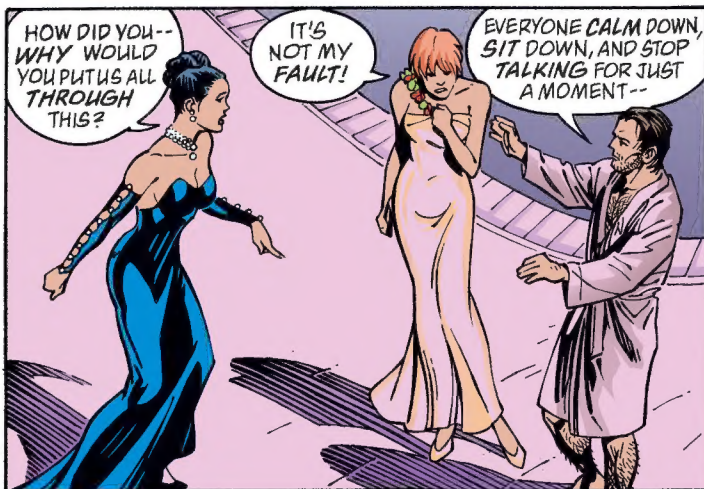
ROSE RED.



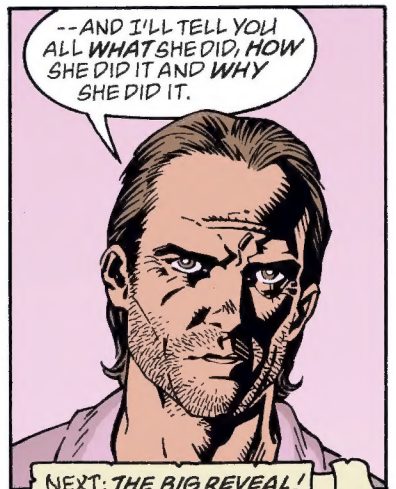
HOW IN ALL THE HELLS?
I DEMAND AN EXPLANATION!
HOW DID YOU PULL A TRICK LIKE THIS?
ROSE!
BUT THERE WAS TOO MUCH BLOOD!
WHICH WE HAD TO CLEAN!
ROSE, WHY DID YOU DO IT?
IF YOU WEREN'T KILLED, THEN--!
AN INVESTIGATION!



ONE AT A TIME!
IF YOU'D ALL RETURN TO YOUR SEATS--
SIT DOWN, YOU GOOFS!
IT'S JUST A GIRL BACK FROM THE DEAD!

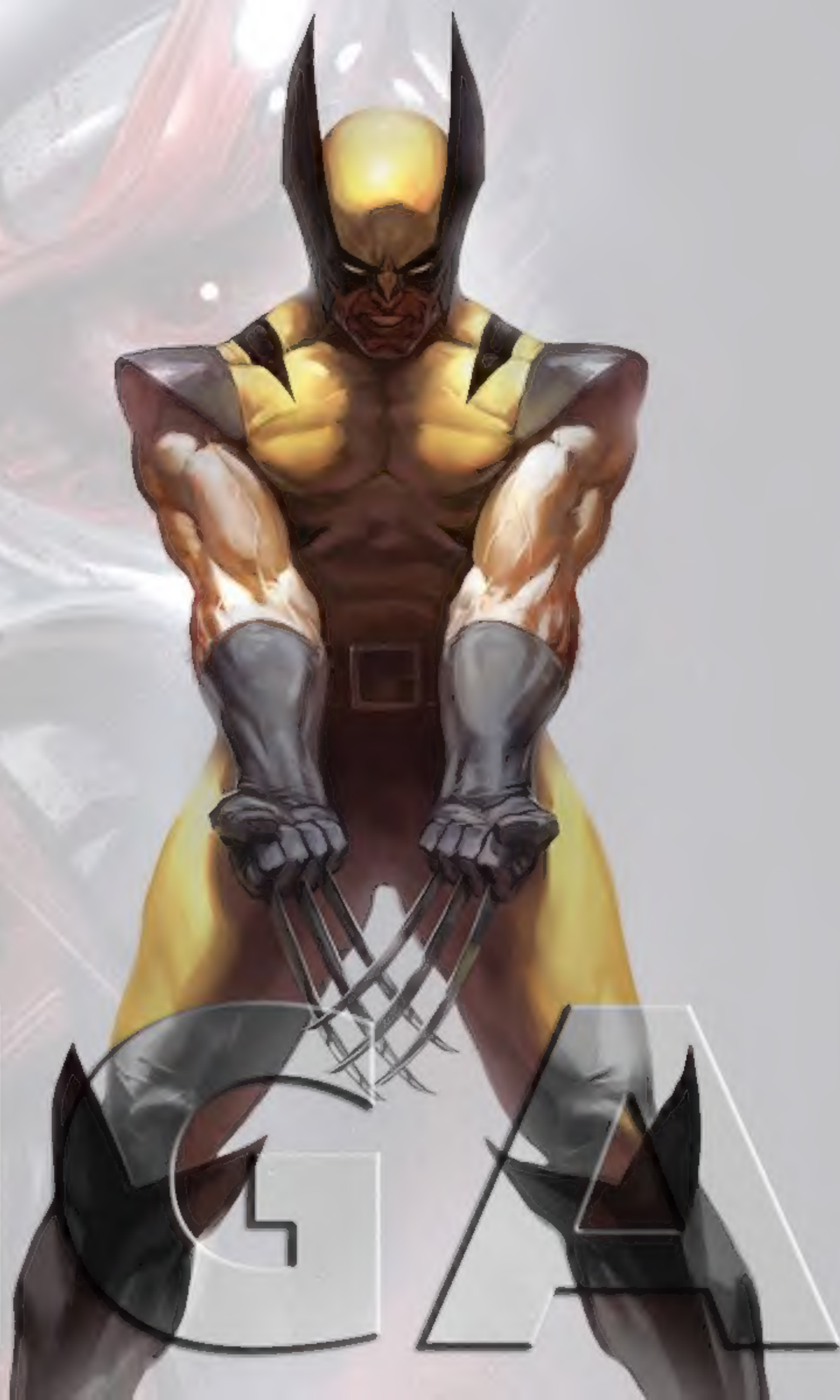


HOW DID YOU-- WHY WOULD YOU PUT US ALL THROUGH THIS?
IT'S NOT MY FAULT!
EVERYONE CALM DOWN, SIT DOWN, AND STOP TALKING FOR JUST A MOMENT--



--AND I'LL TELL YOU ALL WHAT SHE DID, HOW SHE DID IT AND WHY SHE DID IT.

NEXT: THE BIG REVEAL!



NATHAN